2: Courlander 3-6 (1937-1956) 1960 8V3 HA81 8V3

in the services. In the court, the bases of four sacred trees . . . are surrounded by circles of masonry [low brick walls]. These *reposoirs* are inhabited by the *loa* Legba, Ogoun, Loco and Sangos.[5]

There is little in Aubin's description to suggest that houmfors were much different a half century ago from what they are today. He errs in identifying the "thunder stones" solely with Damballa. But his eye for detail was acute. In 1950 a mambo in the neighborhood of this houmfor described by Aubin affirmed that some of the *loa* stones and old coins which he mentioned are still to be found among the properties of a houmfor in the Cul-de-Sac Plain. Others were lost in one of the cleric-inspired raids which despoiled cult temples of drums and other paraphernalia about fifteen years ago.

Many services are held outside the houmfor and the peristyle. Some rituals, such as animal sacrifices and "talking to the *loa* below the water," may take place some distance from the cult buildings. Indeed, various Vodoun ceremonies may be held at waterfalls, at the seashore, in sacred groves, in ordinary homes, in a boat at sea,[6] or under a sacred tree.

The rites of the houmfor are almost without number. They are associated with the supplication or conciliation of virtually countless deities, each of which has his own special service. There are services in multitudinous combinations and permutations for the dead, for twins, for albinos, and for unborn children. There are ceremonies for the elevation of houngi and for initiation, smoke and fire ordeals, and tests of other kinds. There are *mangé loa* (feasts for the deities) and *mangé morts* (feasts for the dead). There are services for the sick, for the crops, and for the harvest. In one context or another, Vodoun relates to nearly every aspect and phase of life—and its counterpart, death. Since every region, every locality, and, in fact, almost every houmfor has developed its own ritual out of the common materials, it is possible to see hundreds of ceremonies without ever seeing precisely the same one twice. Yet the common elements bind them all together.

One such prime element is the possession, the "mounting" of the human body by one of the deities. Possession is a psychological phenomenon common to the rites of many cults throughout the world. It is known in Asia, Africa, Europe, and America. It is not the unique property of the African and his Haitian descendant. In the United States it is a commonplace not only among certain Negro cults but certain white cults as well. The United States Negro had ample West African inspiration for his seizures in the church and at the baptism. The intellectual meaning of these seizures has changed, as have their outward forms to a measurable extent, but their emotional content has not altered.

[5] Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haiti*, pp. 59-59. Cf. p. 349, Category 11c—Author
[6] [Footnote appears on p. 349, Category 11c—Author]

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

Any forces into possible psychological reasons is guesswork. ST

might be hazarded that the men felt they had fought for freedom and so deserved to enjoy its benefits; or that agriculture smacked of the old days of slavery and should be avoided by the superior male; or that since ambition for progress was not a Haitian characteristic, and the work of women produced enough food, there was no reason to change a routine which did very well. One cannot speak with definiteness on these matters. And it was upper-class Haitians and foreigners who adjudged peasant men lazy; slaves and "forced" laborers always appear lazy to their masters.

In modern times at least, male peasants toil strenuously, although not so continuously as their females. The preparation of the ground for planting is hard work, and is done entirely by men. Harvesting, housebuilding, marketing the coffee (one form of marketing not beneath a man's dignity)—these are men's major contributions to economic life.

People who live in isolation commonly tend to slide back in such externalities as clothes, manners, neatness of person and of dwelling, speech, and social ritual. Almost from the very beginning of Haitian history, most of the people were effectively isolated from the rest of the world, so that the superficial aspects of daily life exhibited to all visitors the spectacle of retrogression.

Christophe, who had frequent English visitors in his kingdom, forced his subjects to dress neatly. After his time no ruler made regulations for dress. The men commonly wore a pair of cotton trousers and an abbreviated shirt, while women's dress was a loose-fitting garment which might be called a Mother Hubbard. Children could, and can now, be seen up to the age of four or five without any clothes at all. The nearer the countrypeople live to towns, where the example of the elite is before them, the better their dress is likely to be.

Slave cabins on the former plantations were inhabited by the free Haitians until decay set in and the cabins fell down. They were ordinarily superseded by huts which could be constructed of withes and thatch. The British Minister during the eighteen-twenties saw a man near Plaisance building his house, "plastering the wattling, of which the walls were composed, with a mixture of mud and ashes," using his hand as a trowel.[18] Almost never did a hut have more than

18. Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, I, 150.